

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

Washington, D. C. July 16, 1968. A portrait from the pre-Revolutionary period by John Singleton Copley (1738-1815) has been given to the United States by a direct descendant of the sitter. The announcement was made by John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art.

Bequeathed to the National Gallery by the late Louise Alida Livingston of New York is a three-quarter length painting of Mrs. Metcalf Bowler, wife of a Rhode Island Superior Court Justice, and Miss Livingston's great-great grandmother.

"Mrs. Metcalf Bowler is the tenth painting by Copley to enter our collection, and one which adds substantially to the National Gallery's collection representing his American period," Mr. Walker said.

John Singleton Copley left this country when he was 36. His work here had already established him as an American painter without peer until the rise of Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins. Largely self-taught, he prospered in the

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turbulent colonial era, managing to keep politics apart from the business of painting. For example, Copley is known to have executed a portrait of the American patriot Sam Adams almost immediately after finishing one of Thomas Gage, the same Royal Governor who later arrested Adams and sent British militia to Lexington and Concord.

The Bowler portrait was painted about 1763. This was a significant time in the artist's career according to the authority on Copley, Jules David Prown, who states that in three-quarter length standing portraits such as Mrs. Metcalf Bowler, "Copley achieved a more convincing representation of three-dimensional form than anything previously produced by an American painter."

Mrs. Bowler, born Anne Fairchild in 1732, was the daughter of a Rhode Island merchant. She married her father's business associate in Newport in 1750. The Bowlers and their eleven children lived in a town house in Newport and a farm at Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

Copley is believed to have painted at least two other Bowler portraits, an earlier picture of Mrs. Bowler, about 1758, and a lost portrait of her husband.

Black-and-white photographs and color transparencies are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215.